NOTES AND COMMENT FROM THE WORLD OF MUSIC

FOLKSONG AND MUSIC'S FUTURE

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford on Germany's Musical Decay—Irish Tunes and Beethoven.

By H. E. KREHBIEL.

SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD, who is coming to America to conduct some of his music, including a new pianoforte concerto, at the Norfolk Festival in the first week of June, has contributed an article to "The Musical Quarterly," published by Schirmer, that is calculated to set serious lovers of music, especially those who are interested in the history of the art, to thinking along lines to which The Tribune has several times directed attention within the last few months. Sir Charles is among the foremost musicians of Great Britain and equally eminent as composer and educator. He is an Irishman of the most admirable type and stands without a peer as a representative of the music of his native land. We have heard his "Irish Symphony," which he is to conduct in Norfolk, several times, though not as often as we should have liked to hear it, and have admired it more at each hearing. Long ago his opera "Shamus O'Brien" gave New Yorkers a keen and pure delight, and we have often wished that our orchestra conductors had the wisdom to put his Irish rhapsodies and dances on their programmes. In these compositions he has proclaimed himself a nationalist with something to say which is at once delightful and convincing. The European war seems to have stirred up a train of thought in him which is bound to exercise many minds when the peoples of Europe get through murdering each other and settle down to work out the problem of the future of civilization with other weapons than poisonous gases and seventeen-inch mortars. That a new spirit will enter music as a result of the present blood-letting must be obvious to every thinking mind. What Sir Charles believes that spirit will be he tells us in the article printed in the last number of the excellent journal edited by Mr. Sonneck. It will breathe the rejuvenating breath of the folksong—that expression in art which was found by the people, a free, untrammelled, truthful and potent utterance which came straight from the popular heart and has nothing whatever to do with the materialism which has destroyed true art the world over. It is many years since Germany has known that inspiration, and it will not know it again until it has exchanged the spirit which now dominates its *Kultur* for that ingenuous and lofty idealism which actuated its musical heroes from Bach to Brahms. Germany has not been alone in making the present age what it is, but the dominating influence in music which it has exercised for over two centuries places the responsibility for the present state of music upon it. What that age is like this writer tried to express long ago in a series of articles on the pianoforte and its music, first published in this journal and afterward published in book form. "It is not an artistic age in any sense. It is the age of science, politics and commerce, the last activity determining the course and activities of the two others. It is an age shod with iron. The flowers of art do not and can not sprng up in its path. Indescribably brilliant but hard and cruel are the sparks which it strikes out in its thunderous progress." It was because of the spirit thus characterized that the writer accounted for the decay of pianoforte music, which was his special study at the time; it has also brought with it the degeneration of music of all kinds—it and the development of technical mastery, that "virtuosity" which, when made an end instead of a means, has foreshadowed the decay of creative production since art began. The thought is dominant in the review of modern music which Sir Charles puts in the mouth of a cultured inhabitant of Leipsic—a poet, architect and music lover—whom he met in Leipsic when he went to revisit the scenes of his student days nine years ago. To the arguments of this keensighted man Sir Charles gives up several pages of his essay, entitled: "Some Thoughts Concerning Folksong and Nationality."

ALEXANDER NICHOLAEVICH SCRIABIN,
Who Died in Moscow Last Tuesday.

Sir Charles revisited Leipsic, where he had been a student in the early 70's, in 1906. When first he went to the old literary capital he found still left some of the "Sebastian Bach flavor," a striving for artistic and scientific progress and enthusiasm, mixed with some of the old Philistinism. When he returned, nine years ago, Prussian influence, he says, had begun its work of centralization and appropriation of all interests. The spirit of the nouveau riche which entered with the French milliards had begun to affect the appearance of the German cities. Towns like Weimar had become "literally cities of the dead." Nuremberg in 1876 was still redolent of the Middle Ages; in less than ten years some of its most interesting relics had disappeared. So Leipsic—the Thomasschule had been torn down. There was nothing to show that the house of Bach ever stood there. The Church of St. Thomas had been "restored"—"in the most spick and span style of bad Gothic." "The Johanniskirche, where Bach lies buried, was similarly hacked and hewed into up-to-date smug propriety." The Pleissenburg had given way to "ugly barracks and mock-Parisian flats." The old Gewandhaus and Conservatorium were gone. The Brühl, "a street redolent of Limburg cheeses and as full of gabardined Hebrews as the ghetto of old times," was still there, but its one historic house, that in which Wagner was born, had been torn down. Auerbach's Keller was no more.

It was after he had deplored these changes that his enlightened friend began his discourse. Luther, he said, had directed all the forces of artistic aspiration in Germany into one channel—music. Painting had lapsed into bad mediocrity; architecture had ceased to develop. The Netherlands, Italy and England had each enjoyed a period about equal in length of supremacy; but Germany's period had endured twice as long, thanks to Martin Luther. It had become exhausted, however, with Wagner and Brahms. (We recollect saying something very like this last fall.) It must now go to sleep and wait for its next resurrection of energy, which would come when it had once more absorbed a good and persistent diet of the folksong which was its backbone. The proof of the approaching decay was in the exaltation of detail over design; "the next step would be the use of detail and of all the embellishments and meretriciousness of which it is capable to conceal poverty in design." Richard Strauss was subordinating invention to craftsmanship more and more. He no longer wrote themes of value like those in "Don Juan," but in "Ein Heldenleben" used themes written in his earlier days. Germany must go to rest and wake up with a simple mind.

Coming National Schools.

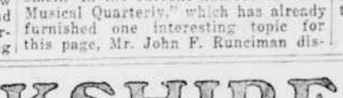
Sir Charles evidently accepted the diagnosis made by his friend without question; indeed, as a man of intellect he could not well do otherwise, for the historical review in all things is accurate and truthful. But it set him out upon an inquiry as to what nations were likely to get their turn, and the answer that he received was that they were Russia and Great Britain. Here we are reminded again of an almost ancient remark of The Tribune's music reviewer. It was on the occasion of the first performance of Tschaikowsky's "Manfred" in Chickering Hall, nearly twenty-nine years ago, that he uttered the warning: "Look out for the Muscovite! He's a dangerous power in politics, and the musical supremacy of Germany is being threatened." The words look more prophetic than ever just now. Sir Charles is reminded by the answer of his friend of a statement in the same direction made by Brahms some ten years before.

"Speaking to an intimate friend of his and mine not long before his death," says Sir Charles, "Brahms was lamenting the musical prospects of his own country. He looked 'round and saw nothing. The schools of composition were so hidebound that they were turning out two classes of as widely different characteristics as Conservatives and anarchists, both coming from the same primary cause, red-tape teaching—those who succumbed becoming Philistines, those who kicked against the pricks becoming Revolutionaries. Between them both healthy progress was being hopelessly manacled. 'Over there,' he said, pointing toward England, 'things are different. Something will come out of that country. And over there,' pointing toward Russia, 'there is great movement.'" A greater than Brahms once expressed similar admiration for England, though he was talking politics, not art: "You have heads on your shoulders in your country," said Beethoven to one of his English visitors.

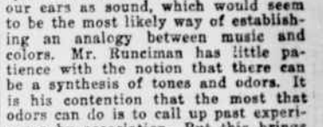
IRISH FOLKSONG'S INFLUENCE.

Sir Charles Stanford is so thoroughly Irish that he finds Irish influences in quarters in which they have never been suspected before. We wish we might follow him in his discussion of folksong characteristics, but space will not permit. He recognizes three main streams of folksong—Keltic, Slavonic and German. There are lesser rivers, many of which have characteristics as striking as the greater and broader streams—Hungarian, Tyrolean, Spanish, Scandinavian, Italian and French. The literature of Keltic folksong is by far the largest of all and the most varied. It has many branches—Lowland and Highland Scotch, Irish (the largest), Welsh, Cornish, Manx and Breton. Its origin is lost in antiquity. Dr. George Petrie, who collected some two thousand specimens of Irish folkmusic, believed that he had found resemblances between Indian and Irish lullabies. Not to be outdone, Sir Charles finds a relationship between Hungarian and Irish music in the cadences—also in the florid ornamentation woven around the old Irish laments (the keens)—and he gives an instance of the use of the Oriental scale, with its interval of an augmented second, in the "Lament of Owen Roe O'Neil." Irish harvesters have visited England and brought about an interweaving of Irish and English characteristics in the folksongs of both peoples. More than that, the Irish have tinctured even the songs of the black slaves of our Southland. Mark, note: "A similar interweaving of national types may be traced in many negro melodies in America. Dvorák's exploration into negro melodies when he was in New York gives an example of this, for many of the tunes which he used in his compositions of that period are really Irish tunes colored with a negro brush." We are reminded of the patriotic Irish woman who claimed the invention of the pianoforte for her country. "It's nothing but an Irish harp put in a box and played by machinery," said she. Unfortunately for Sir Charles's contention, Dvorák didn't use a single negro tune in his American compositions. There are only three of them which show elements drawn from negro melodies—the symphony "From the New World," a quartet and a quintet—and not a single one of their themes is borrowed. There is an echo of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," in the first four measures of the principal theme of the first movement of the symphony, and that is the end of Dvorák's material borrowings. This has been said over and over again, but it seems impossible to eradicate the notion that Dvorák made his American symphony out of negro melodies.

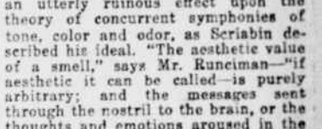
We are surprised that Sir Charles should have fallen into the vulgar error, but it seems as if he might have been a bit careless in another of his efforts to take as much credit as possible for the folksong of his native isle. Beethoven, he thinks, permitted it to influence him in the composition of his Symphony in A—the Seventh. Beethoven composed this symphony in 1812. Between 1810 and 1814 careful students of the great composer's life history knows that "the great Netherlander," as Sir Charles calls him, was intermittently occupied in making arrangements of Irish, Scotch, Welsh and English airs for Thomson of Edinburgh. Some of the characteristics of the Irish airs crept into the symphony, Sir Charles holds. He finds the characteristic cadence with its iteration of three notes in the first movement, and says the whole piece is in jig rhythm. So it is. But this is not all: the last movement is "a reel pure and simple, though gigantic in structure. The first theme is a two-four version of the final phrase of 'Kitty of Coleraine.'



"This tune" (it is Sir Charles who is speaking), "was arranged by Beethoven, who, in the last 'symphony' of the song, took this part of the theme and treated it thus:



"Compare the Seventh Symphony:



"At all events" (we must let Sir Charles have his full say), "Beethoven could not be charged with another injustice to Ireland. Kitty of Coleraine little dreamed that she would be numbered among the immortal nine."

Alas for the pretty story! If Beethoven ever arranged either of the two airs which go by the name of "Kitty of Coleraine," or any air containing the phrases which Sir Charles quotes, there is no evidence of the fact in the "Complete Works of Beethoven," published by Breitkopf & Härtel. The rhythm of the last movement of the symphony, however, may be found in the "symphony" (that is the postlude) of the arrangement of the Welsh air known as "The Monks of Bangor's March."

THE LATE ALEXANDER SCRIABIN AND HIS WORK AS PIANIST AND COMPOSER

The cable has brought the news of the death of Alexander Nicholaevitch Scriabin, which took place in Moscow last Tuesday. There had been no report of his illness, and we are therefore left in the dark as to the cause of the blood poisoning which was set down as the cause of his death. The production here of his last symphonic poem "Prometheus," with its accompaniments of colored lights, as recently as the 20th of last March, and the fact that this work is one of the features with which Mr. Modest Altschuler is seeking to exploit Russian music on the tour which he began with the Russian Symphony Orchestra last Monday, serve to direct unusual attention to a rather remarkable career, which appears to have come to a sudden and unexpected end. Whither that career would have led is now likely to be a topic for considerable speculation. That it was to lead into wider, possibly more devious paths than those entered upon with the "Poem of Fire" may easily be guessed from the fact that the composer was reported to be at work upon a symphony which should be a synthesis of musical sounds, colors and odors.

Toward the realization of this ideal Mr. Scriabin had been driven by his interest in esoteric philosophy. The plan having occupied his mind for nearly a decade, it is probable that its embodiment may be found among his posthumous papers. For this the world will have to wait, which it can do, no doubt, without great exercise of patience. Only a small body of extremists have exhibited interest in his experiments, or professed belief in the soundness of the theory of the potential relationship between what the ear hears, the eyes see and the nostrils smell. In the current number of "The Musical Quarterly," which has already furnished one interesting topic for this page, Mr. John F. Runciman discusses the subject in his customary vigorous fashion. So far as colors are concerned, he points out that the analogies between them and music have depended thus far chiefly on experiments made with blind persons, all of whom had read a great deal and had imbibed ideas of color from their reading or from conversations with persons who could both see and hear. They tell us nothing about any possible ratio existing between the vibrations of the atmosphere which reach our eyes as color and those which reach our ears as sound, which would seem to be the most likely way of establishing an analogy between music and colors. Mr. Runciman has little patience with the notion that there can be a synthesis of tones and odors. It is his contention that the most that odors can do is to call up past experiences by association. But this brings personal equation into the field, with an utterly ruinous effect upon the theory of concurrent symphonies of tone, color and odor, as Scriabin described his ideal. "The aesthetic value of a smell," says Mr. Runciman—"if aesthetic it can be called—is purely arbitrary; and the messages sent through the nostril to the brain, or the thoughts and emotions aroused in the brain by any one odor, are not the same in any two cases." At last Mr. Runciman sums up his discussion thus: "But music is the voice of man, and every stirring of the human soul, if it be expressed in music at all, must be expressed lyrically in song; when music ceases to be song it ceases to be music. What Scriabin and Schönberg offer us is something that is not music, and it is not in the proper sense of the word meant to be music. It may turn out to be better than music, but that is hardly conceivable so long as they are trying to make a kind of

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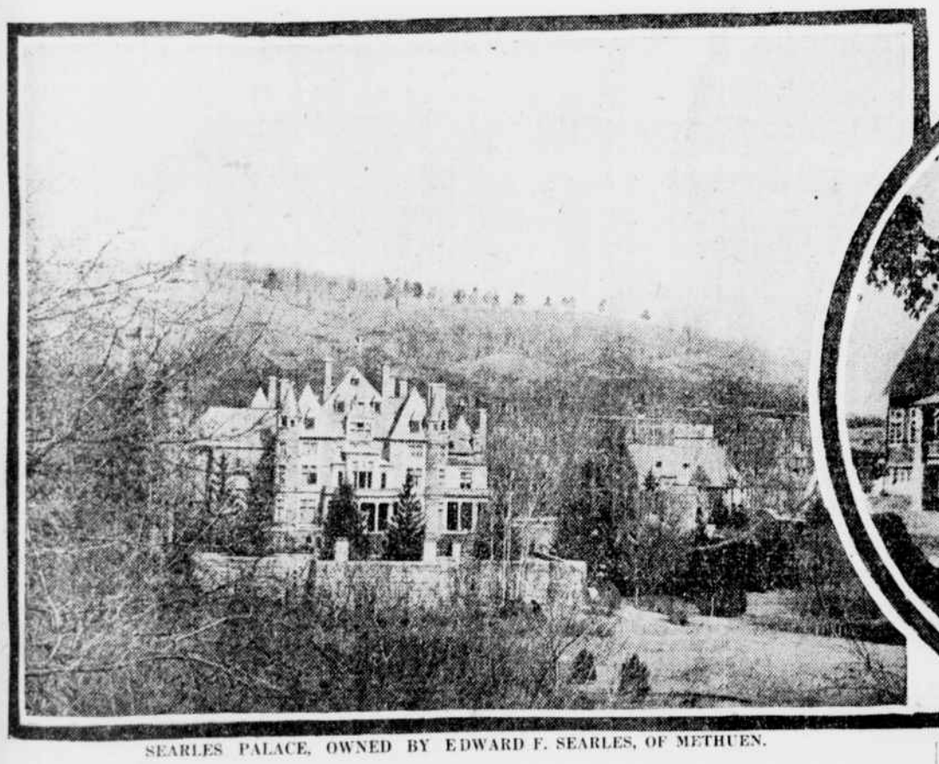
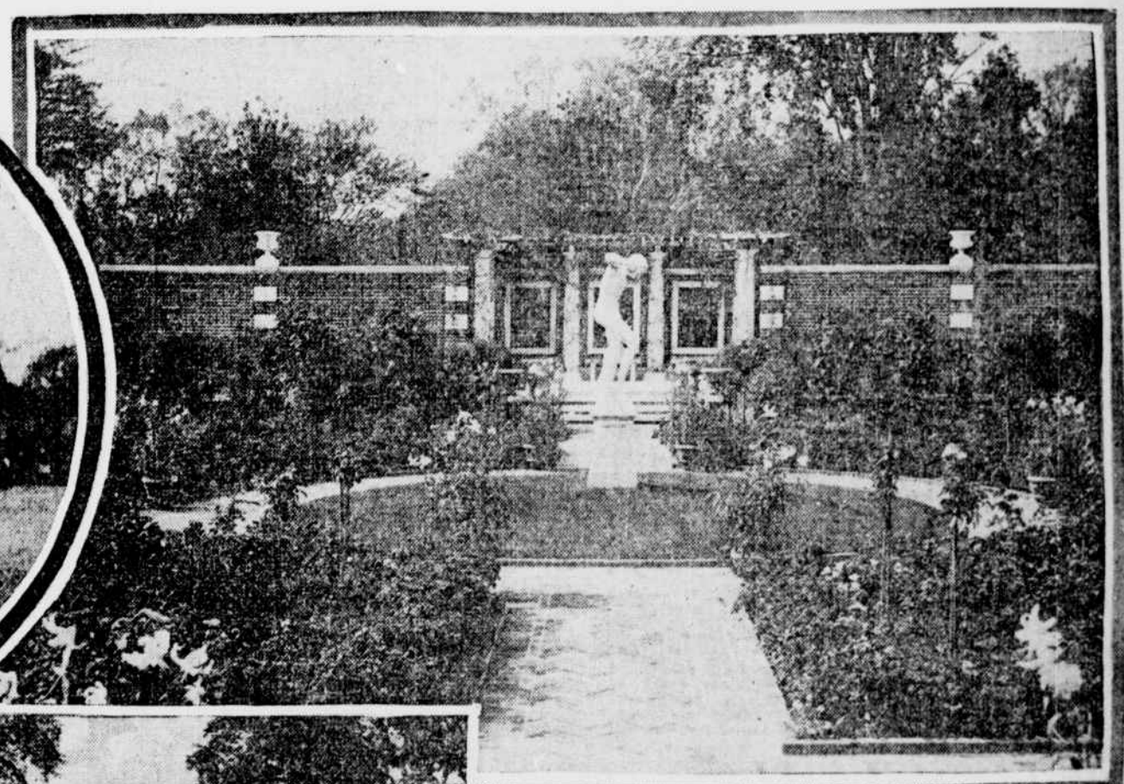
GREAT BARRINGTON--A GEM OF THE BERKSHIRE HILLS



SEARLES PALACE, OWNED BY EDWARD F. SEARLES, OF METHUEN.

WYANTENUCK GOLF CLUB HOUSE.



MASON MEMORIAL LIBRARY.

"WHERE do you spend your summers?"

"Oh! we go to Great Barrington, Mass.—a little town where we spent our honeymoon a good many years ago."

"Sentimental?"

"Well, not as a rule, but there's something queer about that town. If you go there once you're sure to go again. The people themselves say that any one who has once really known Great Barrington life always wanders back there, sooner or later."

My travelling companions, on a long trip West, had talked casually of many things, but the name "Great Barrington" arrested my attention, and I deliberately closed my magazine and listened:

"Ever been in Berkshire?"

"No."

"Well, you've something to look forward to. There are a number of beautiful towns in that famous Berkshire region, but, to my mind, the most interesting and attractive of them all is Great Barrington, nestled amid the hills at the southern entrance to the county.

"Yes, it's a summer resort in a way; that is, there are fine hotels, good boarding houses and cottages to rent for the summer, but still it has a happy, interesting life of its own all the year through. You know, some of those places go to sleep in November and do not stir again until May. No, it's not a millionaire's town. There are lots of wealthy people there, who have beautiful homes, but not enough to really 'taint' the atmosphere. The people are very democratic and good sports. A man isn't made to feel like a beggar up there, even if he does drive a 1913 model or even if he has no car at all. It's just a beautiful country place, where one can have everything necessary to health and the pursuit of happiness—good air, good water, good drainage, good roads, good schools, good stores, good society and a wonderful golf course. Come up next summer and play a round with me. If you don't like it, I'll pay your fare both ways."

Here the speakers drifted off into the smoker, but my mind was made up, and when summer came my wife and I took our new car and started for Berkshire. As we neared the Massachusetts line the landscape increased in beauty, the hills grew bolder, graceful elms dotted the meadows, and white pines and silvery birches mingled in frequent groups of natural beauty, which Frederick Law Olmsted would find it difficult to improve upon.

We drove into Great Barrington at sunset, found a good hotel—comfortable, homelike and reasonable. Here we spent two happy weeks and learned many things about the old town, for Great Barrington has much of historic interest.

It was named for Lord Barrington, of England, and the word "Great" was added to distinguish it from Barrington, R. I., which was then a part of Massachusetts. Here the first armed resistance to the dominion of George III was made, on April 16, 1774—more than eight months before the battle of Lexington. No blood was shed, but the Crown's judges were forced to leave the town. Here William Cullen Bryant found a bride and made his first home. Some of his best poems were written while practising law in Great Barrington.

The town is shut in on the north by Monument Mountain—a picturesque and rugged pile from whose top Bryant saw

The beauty and the majesty of earth
Spread wide beneath

—but at the south, the valley widens, opening up a wonderful vista of the Canaan Hills, while at the southwest, the shining blue dome of Mount Everett rises 2,500 feet high—"a thing of beauty" easily seen from every farm house and garden, as no foothills intervene to shut the top away from those who live at its base. This Dome is to South Berkshire what "the Great Stone Face" is to Hawthorne's villagers. Massachusetts has recently bought this peak for a state reservation, and built a good road for automobiles and carriages to a point less than one-half mile from the top.

The broad, well paved main street of the town parallels the Housatonic River, on either side of which lie highlands crowned with beautiful homes. The attractive business centre has fine blocks and well furnished stores that would do credit to a town of three times its size—for this is a trading centre for several smaller towns. The town is the possessor of three fine church properties. The new Roman Catholic church of white marble is a notable feature in the landscape, while St. James's Episcopal, with its parish house, is as good a bit of church architecture as one can find in a day's journey, and the Congregational Church, chapel, cloister and manse, makes an imposing pile of blue dolomite.

In this church is an organ so wonderful in its tone and construction that visitors come from far and near to hear it. It is numbered in a list of the largest fifteen organs in the world and possesses the finest-voiced trombone pedal stop found on any organ in America.

A little further north stands the Mason Library, somewhat back from the village street, under spreading elms. "Architecture" for November, 1913, says: "It is very seldom that a building comes before us which can be so unsparingly praised as this library at Great Barrington. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that this is the most attractive small library building in America, both because of its intrinsic beauty and because of thorough suitability to its location."

The interior is wonderful in its beauty and convenience, and the books are so well chosen that the collection is well worthy of its housing.

A beautiful little theatre furnishes good plays frequently and high class "movies" every day.

A handsome stone and concrete wall, backed by poplars, shuts off the "Searles Palace" from the main street of the town, so that, once within that wall, one can easily imagine the place to be an English country seat surrounded by a vast park. This beautiful dwelling was built by the widow of Mark Hopkins, of Union Pacific fame, and is now owned by Edward F. Searles, of Methuen. Mount Petra, a sightly elevation, lies directly south of this estate.

Brookside, now owned by William Hall Walker, is one of the oldest and best laid out places in the county—an estate of 700 acres crossed by the Housatonic, into which flows a hurrying little trout brook, stopping on its way to adorn the grounds with artificial ponds and a tiny waterfall. Grand old trees line the avenue leading to this spacious and beautiful home. Mr. Walker allows the townspeople and their friends to enjoy with him the beauty of his wonderful gardens.

ITALIAN GARDEN AT BROOKSIDE, ESTATE OF WILLIAM H. WALKER.

Dr. F. S. Pearson's home, Edgewood, is the starting point of a vast estate of 15,000 acres stretching away into adjoining towns. Dr. Pearson is a lover of nature and is doing much to preserve the woodland and game of this section from destruction.

Thanks to the excellent fish and game laws and wardens of Massachusetts, as well as to the interest of local sportsmen, the lakes, streams and woods of this neighborhood are kept well stocked and afford much good sport in the open seasons.

We spent all our forenoons at the Wyantenuck Golf Club, which prides itself on having one of the finest 18-hole golf courses in all New England. This course was laid out by R. D. Pryde, the New Haven professional. It affords ample tests for the expert and furnishes unparalleled recreation for the tired business man and the golf loving public in general. The club grounds comprise 200 acres, situated one and one-half miles from the village, with hourly trolley service. The clubhouse contains a large assembly room, card rooms, locker rooms, shower baths for both men and women and a large swimming pool. The wide verandas overlook the four regulation clay tennis courts, and from this vantage ground may be seen the play on three holes.

Eleven of the holes are on high ground, affording magnificent views; the rest of the course stretches along a plateau in front of the clubhouse, then drops down to the valley below, through which winds the water hazard—Green River, a stream immortalized by the poet Bryant. The whole course has been well but not over trapped, and natural hazards employed wherever possible. A reservoir on the summit of the hill feeds the greens and trees with an abundance of water, and the entire course is kept in perfect condition by the club professional. The length of the holes is as follows:

Out: 381—235—330—406—600—316—210—410—175. Total, 3,063 yards.

In: 306—160—402—556—185—332—505—220—361. Total, 3,028 yards.

Much of the social life of the town centres at this clubhouse. Subscription assemblies, private parties, Saturday night dances and members, and Wednesday thés dansants furnish pleasure for all.

In the afternoons we motored. They say one can drive here all summer and take a new road each day; to-day the River Road, to-morrow skirt Lake Mansfield on through the Pearson Woods to Long Lake, and at each turn wonder at the lights and shadows on the distant hills.

But all good things must end, and one bright morning we drove out over this beautiful "under mountain" road, headed for the great noisy city, and sympathizing with Henry Ward Beecher, who once declared that he never entered Great Barrington without wishing that he need never leave it.

S. S. C.